The JUDGE’s Corner
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I’m going to try a little different format for this Digest. Give me some feedback on which you like better—and what you would like to see included here in the future!

Make 2015 the Year You Start to Show Dahlias

It will be show season by the time you get this Digest! Yeah!

One of my favorite places to exhibit flowers is the Geauga County Fair. The fair is open to the public during staging; I think it might even be the free day for Senior Citizens. In any case, the public is always present in and around the staging area. They complicate the process of moving blooms into the show; but they are also always fascinated by the blooms! “Oh my gosh; look at that one!” “Are they real? No, they can’t be!” “Did you really grow that?!” “Wow, I’ve never seen a flower that big!” “I think my grandmother used to grow those! I haven’t seen one for years!” It would be easy to spend Friday night talking to people instead of staging. It is, in short, a lot of fun to have so many people admire our handiwork and be so interested in our favorite hobby. Be aware that you do need to pre-register for the Geauga Fair. Do it online by August 12 at geaugafair.com.

Special Invitation

There are many DSO growers who don’t exhibit. Exhibiting is an important first step in becoming a judge. Here is a special invitation to each of you – Bring a few blooms to
the Cuyahoga Fair. Many of our usual exhibitors will be at the 50th Anniversary Show in Columbus. We will need blooms to fill up the show tables! I’m confident you will have a good time and you are pretty likely to come away with a few ribbons and a few dollars in prize money to cover that funnel cake.

Setup and staging start Saturday morning, August 15, at 7:30AM. You don’t need to pre-register and you don’t have to pay to get into the fair! The fair doesn’t open until noon. Come to the West entrance, Gate 3, next to the flower barn for easy access. (There is a registration fee that can be paid there; it is reimbursed by DSO.) You would also be welcome to serve as a Candidate Judge and/or a Clerk in the judging process. More on that later! Come, enjoy!

**Judging and a Picnic—A Great Combination**

One of the highlights of the summer will be the picnic at Brant and Carol’s Maple Crest Farm on August 22nd. The real fun in growing dahlias is having the opportunity to enjoy each others’ company in a situation like this one! You will find good friends, good food, lots of beautiful dahlias, the opportunity to compare strategies on getting the most out of our space and our soil and our plants, and (maybe best of all, :-) ) a discussion of what makes good dahlias great.
One of the more difficult requirements of becoming a judge and then retaining your status as a judge is the judging of seedlings. The rules require judges to evaluate at least 10 seedlings over a 5 year period in order to maintain their judging status.

The plan after lunch at the picnic will be to treat a few of the sets of plants in Brant and Carol’s garden as seedlings. We will then divide up into teams and judge them as seedlings. It will be a hands-on workshop and everyone is welcome to participate! The judging rules specifically allow this approach to count towards the 2 per year requirement guideline because most clubs are not within a distance that provides easy access to a Trial Garden. The other way to judge seedlings is at a show with cut blooms. Let me know if you are having trouble reaching that 10 seedling target; we can find ways to make it happen.

**Virus Update**

Tony Evangelista and I made a presentation on virus at the June DSO meeting. The slides are on the DSO website. ADS members in the DSO received a brochure on the topic in the June Bulletin. The bottom line is “If in doubt, throw it out.” That strategy is becoming more painful for me than I anticipated. I started out by not planting any that had any indication of virus appearance in the foliage. Nevertheless, I’ve now pulled about 60 plants (~10%) with questionable foliage, including my last Wendy Miner and most of my Baron Katies. Bummer! It seems
that the stress of 10” of rain is bringing out virus in even more plants. I had to pull even more when we got back from vacation! One lesson, for sure, is to grow more spares in pots for replacements next year!!

I am also watching a number of plants with foliage that is a little unusual, but not yet similar to any of the pictures Prof. Pappu has provided. They have dark veins and relatively lighter green leaves than usual (See “Kept” foliage in picture on left). I hope that this appearance is a result of the use of no chemical fertilizer and a lot of rain (well over 10” by June 27). I am still convinced that we will all benefit from adherence to the “If in doubt, …” strategy! I encourage you all to stick with it!

**Classification Challenge**

One key starting point for the evaluation of a seedling is classifying it. I will solve the first one with you. You can work on the second one and get the answer next month. Both cultivars are relatively new introductions. This guy is about 5.5” in diameter so it is a BB. The challenge is the extent to which the ray florets are revolute, right? That would be best determined by being able to look closely at them. With just the picture to work with, however, the tips of some of the florets aren’t closed, suggesting that they would not be likely to be fully revolute for more than half their length. Thus, your conclusion would be SC, right? The color is relatively straightforward since we can clearly see the yellow at the center of the bloom. Therefore it is a blend. The color chips turned out to be PK14 and YL19. You now need to look at the Blend colors in the CHD to find that when the PK14 is the dominant color, the blend is light. The classification is, therefore, BB SC LB and the cultivar is Ted and Margaret Kennedy’s Hollyhill Angela.

OK, here is your opportunity to excel. Let’s say the bloom on the left averages 10” in diameter and the subtle color on the ray florets can be considered to be a blush. What is its classification?
Judging Challenge

In the context of judging a new seedling, what is Substance? What are some of the positive and some of the negative indicators of substance that you should consider when evaluating substance? This one is easy to find in your Guide to Judging Dahlias.

Judging Seminars

We will have two major judging seminars in 2015; the first at the picnic at Brant and Carol’s and the second after judging at the Petitti Show. The first will focus on Trial Garden judging; the second, at Petitti’s, on new seedlings and Seedling Bench Evaluation (SBE). The new seedling portion of the Petitti seminar will focus on the second round of Blossom Gulch seeds and seedlings I distributed in May. We will pick the best and the worst (based on our judging criteria!) of those new seedlings. The SBE portion of the seminar will be an evaluation of those Blossom Gulch seedlings that are now three years old. They will be eligible for formal TG and SBE evaluation next summer. Please enter the best of your Blossom Gulch I seedlings as a triple entry in the appropriate class. We will pick several to evaluate in the seminar after the show judging is complete. Everyone is welcome to join that afternoon judging discussion.

We will also have a special judging seminar for Candidate Judges after the completion of judging at the Cuyahoga Fair. While everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend, the questions and the perspectives of the active and potential Candidate Judges will be the focus of the discussion. I am confident that the discussion will be interesting to all judging levels. First time showers are particularly welcome to come join the seminar. Come help understand why the show results were as they were!

Ron